

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 23266

THE FOLLOWING TELEGRAM WAS SENT 12 AUG 78 FM AMBCONSUL
UDORN TO BANGKOK INFO VIENTIANE AND IS BEING REPEATED
FOR YOUR ACTION/INFO:

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L UDORN 0171

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, TH, LA
SUBJECT: REFUGEE INFLUX INTO NORTHEAST

REF: UDORN 0156

1. CONREPS CONDUCTED SURVEY AUGUST 1-4 OF NORTHEAST
DISTRICTS BORDERING ON LAOS AND CAMBODIA AS WELL AS
REGION'S REFUGEE CAMPS AND DETENTION CENTERS. THEIR
FINDINGS FOLLOW.

2. INTERVIEWS WITH DISTRICT POLICE CHIEFS ALONG BORDER
AREAS INDICATE TOTAL OF APPROXIMATELY 2500 RPT 2500
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REFUGEES ENTERED NORTHEAST FROM LAOS DURING MONTH OF
JULY AND WERE PROCESSED INTO CAMPS AND DETENTION CENTERS
BY DISTRICT AUTHORITIES. TOTAL INCLUDES 1750 LAO AND 450
HMONG WHO ENTERED NONG KHAI PROVINCE, AND 275 LAO
WHO ENTERED NAKHON PHANOM (NKP) AND UBON PROVINCES.

DISTRICT OFFICIALS IN UBON AND NKP PROVINCES BELIEVE

THAT MANY MORE LOWLAND LAO REFUGEES ENTERED THEIR TWO PROVINCES DURING JULY BUT DID NOT PROCESS THROUGH DISTRICT IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES.

A SMALL NUMBER OF KHMER ARRIVALS (FEWER THAN 50 PERSONS) ENTERED NORTHEAST'S SOUTHERN TIER PROVINCES DURING THE MONTH.

3. JULY INFLUX INTO NONG KHAI PROVINCE APPEARS TO BE HIGHEST EVER, REPRESENTING A 50 PERCCNT INCREASE OVER JUNE. CONSULATE RECORDS INDICATE, HOWEVER, THAT THE NUMBER OF LAO REFUGEES CROSSING MEKONG RIVER INTO NONG KHAI HAS INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY DURING EACH RAINY SEASON (JULY-OCTOBER) SINCE 1975. REFUGEE SPOKESMEN IN NONG KHAI CAMP CLAIM THAT IT IS SAFER TO GAIN ACCESS TO MEKONG RIVER FROM LAO SIDE WHEN RIVER IS SWOLLEN, WITH LESS CHANCE OF BEING SPOTTED BY PL BORDER PATROLS. THE MOST DANGEROUS PERIOD, THEY EXPLAIN, IS WHEN WATER LEVEL IS LOW AND LONG, EXPOSED SANDBARS MUST BE CROSSED.

4. RECENT HMONG ARRIVALS IN BUNGKAN AND PHON PHISAI DISTRICTS OF NONG KHAI PROVINCE CLAIM THAT LARGE-SCALE ATTACKS BY COMBINED PL/NVN/COMMUNIST HMONG TROOPS ON HMONG RESISTANCE STRONGHOLDS IN PHU BIA MOUNTAIN AREA CONTINUE TO CAUSE HILLTRIBERS TO ATTEMPT ESCAPE INTO THAILAND. ONE YOUNG HMONG SOLDIER WHO CROSSED INTO CONFIDENTIAL

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BUNGKAN AUGUST 4 CLAIMS THAT AN ADDITIONAL 1000 HMONG HAVE LEFT PHU BIA AND ARE NOW ATTEMPTING TO MAKE THEIR WAY TO THAILAND. HE FURTHER CLAIMS THAT ABOUT 30,000 HMONG REMAIN IN PHU BIA AREA, BUT THAT THERE ARE ONLY 500 POORLY-ARMED FIGHTING MEN AMONG THEM.

5. POPULATIONS OF UNHCR-SUPPORTED CAMPS IN NONG KHAI AND UBON CONTINUE TO EXPAND RAPIDLY. CAMP OFFICIALS REPORTS THERE ARE NOW 29,230 RPT 29,230 PERSONS IN NONG KHAI CAMP AND 30,560 RPT 30,560 IN UBON CAMP. POPULATION TOTALS AT LOEI, SURIN, AND KORAT CAMPS REMAINED RELATIVELY STABLE DURING JULY AT ABOUT 12,500, 4700 AND 1600, RESPECTIVELY.

6. POPULATIONS AT NONG KHAI, NKP AND BURIRAM PROVINCIAL DETENTION CENTERS HAVE BEEN REDUCED RECENTLY BY TRANSFERS OF NUMBERS OF DETAINEES TO REGION'S UNHCR-SUPPORTED CAMPS. NKP CENTER CURRENTLY HOUSES 305 PERSONS, DOWN OVER TWO HUNDRED SINCE BEGINNING OF JUNE DUE TO TRANSFERS OF REFUGEES TO NONG KHAI AM UBON CAMPS. SIMILARLY, BURIRAM CENTER, NOW HOLDING 400 PERSONS, RECENTLY TRANSFERRED A GROUP OF 87 KHMER TO SURIN CAMP. AS OF

AUGUST 1, NONG KHAI DETENTION CENTER HOUSED 850 REFUGEES. IT APPEARS THAT DISTRICT AUTHORITIES IN NORTHEAST CONCERNED WITH HANDLING REFUGEES ARE UTILIZING THESE DETENTION CENTERS FOR THREE PRIMARY PURPOSES: (1) AS TRANSIT FACILITIES FOR RECENTLY ARRIVED REFUGEES WHO ARE TO BE PROCESSED INTO A UNHCR-CAMP; (2) FOR LONG-TERM DETENTION OF NEW ARRIVALS NOT DEEMED TO BE LEGITIMATE REFUGEES; AND (3) FOR DETENTION OF FORMER REFUGEE CAMP RESIDENTS WHO CAMP AUTHORITIES CONSIDER UNDESIRABLE.

7. WE ESTIMATE A CURRENT TOTAL OF AT LEAST 100,000 RPT 100,000 REFUGEES ARE NOW LIVING IN NORTHEAST THAILAND. THIS TOTAL INCLUDES: 78,000 PERSONS LIVING IN UNHCR-
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SUPPORTED CAMPS; 20,000-25,000 ILLEGALLY RESIDING IN BORDER PROVINCES; AND 1,500 DETAINEES CURRENTLY HFWD AT PROVINCIAL DETENTION CENTERS IN NONG KHAI, BURIRAM, AND NOKHON PHANOM. RUEBENSAAL

UNQUOTE ABRAMOWITZ

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